

ARFL NEWSLETTER

Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians of York University

Website: <http://yuarfl.org/>



May 13, 2016 ARFL Spring Meeting & Presentation
Harry Crowe Room
Atkinson Building



Meeting Agenda

10:30	Coffee and Conversation
11:00	Call Meeting to Order
President's Report	R. Drummond
Vice-President's Report	S. Saleuddin
Treasurer's Report	S. Jeffers
Newsletter Editor's Report	J. Green
YURFL Benefits Trust	F. Morgan
YURA Report	F. Fletcher
Website Update	A. Stauffer/V. Monty
ARFL Discussion Group	R. Drummond
Other Business	
12:00	Lunch
1:00	David Andrew Lecture
3:00	Close of Meeting



Our Featured Speaker – Dr. David Andrew

Dr. David Andrew's research interests are in stroke, head injury and brain imaging. He has been funded by the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada and the CIHR for almost 35 years. He has published over 65 publications in peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Andrew has taught neurophysiology, functional neuroanatomy and histology at Queen's University over this same time

period. During the past five years he has interacted closely with Queen's neuroscientists and clinicians to establish two advanced neuroscience courses: *Disorders of the Nervous System* and *Controversies in Neuroscience*. He has recently posted two YouTube videos, one on *Neuroscience and Religion* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUZISi154A4> and the other on *Personhood, Neuroscience and Abortion* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yucOamnzIKU>



Our brain: Wired for God and Country
David Andrew

Scientists tend to sit back, confident that the insight that good science brings to the world will overcome superstition and pseudoscience. But our human brain is wired to be both tribal and religious and this has had important evolutionary advantages for our survival over the past few hundred thousand years. Therefore while science has recently replaced religion in revealing how the world works, our brain still naturally defaults to god-based explanations. *Dualism* is the idea that the brain and the mind exist on different planes...rather like trying to separate a computer from its computations. Dualism is rightly dismissed by science as lacking evidence. In this talk I will attempt to trace why dualistic thinking is nevertheless embedded in everyone's thought processes, including those of scientists. The take-home message is that all of us are wired for God and Country and we all tend to use religious explanations to make sense of the world, even though such explanations are improbable. So here lies the irony: Our human brain gives us the unlimited intellectual potential to rule over all we see. But at the same time, it drives our illusion of servitude to a supreme power of undetermined origin and location.



ARFL's President's Report

Robert Drummond

In the past year, ARFL has pursued two main goals – neither with outstanding success, but maybe that just means there is more to do next year. The first was to pursue

improvements in post-retirement benefits through YUFA negotiations, and the second was to secure recognition and assistance for the contributions made by emeriti to the intellectual life of York University.

On the benefits front, we were not successful in persuading the Employer to remove the cap on dental benefits or to add such items as hearing aids or massage therapy to the plan. There was also no agreement to fix the percentage of health and dental benefits that the Employer would pay, but happily there was agreement to add a further \$300,000 to the contractual yearly cap on such benefits, bringing the total to \$1.1 million. There was also an improvement in out-of-country medical emergency coverage, from 80% payment up to a lifetime maximum of \$20,000, to 100% payment up to a lifetime maximum of \$1 million, though with covered days limited to 60 per trip, and with an additional premium intended to cover the cost of the new insurance. Current employees who elect benefits coverage at retirement will have this travel benefit and will pay the enhanced premium. However, because so many current retirees took out additional private insurance to make up for the very small travel benefit in the pre-existing plan, we persuaded YUFA and the Employer to allow current retirees to choose whether or not to take the new travel benefit. Given the confusion and uncertainty this choice engendered, I think our advocacy on this point comes under the heading, “No good deed goes unpunished.”

In addition, the Employer pressed for an increase in the base premium for health and dental coverage. They noted that the premium had not increased for nearly two decades, while we noted that some places provide benefits with no premium at all (not

to mention deductibles or co-pays). However, the Employer prevailed. The parties also agreed that the Joint Benefits Sub-committee (of the JCOAA) would convene soon to review the continuing issues around retiree benefits; YUFA has agreed to include a representative of ARFL in those discussions and I have agreed to serve in that role, with Past-President Al Stauffer serving as back-up (and worthy advisor). This has not been a stellar year for negotiating retiree benefits, and I can only hope that the next round will be better.

On the matter of assistance and recognition of emeriti contributions, we began with some very small steps – e.g. urging all units to include, in their website list of members, emeriti who wished to be there and to include contact information for those who agreed to provide it. I am happy to say that almost all units now do so, though with varying degrees of useful information. The Executive met this winter with Vice President Research and Innovation, Robert Haché, to discuss the role Senior Scholars can and do play in support of the University's research agenda and reputation, and that did net us a one-line mention in his report on efforts to enhance research at York. We hope in time, when we can produce more reliable data on our activities, to be better acknowledged as valuable contributors to that enterprise. We have lobbied the Dean of Graduate Studies to ensure that she remind Programme Directors of the legitimate roles emeriti can still play in graduate teaching, supervision and assessment. She has expressed support and a willingness to help. Finally, while the previous round of YUFA negotiations led to some improvement in supports for continued scholarly and creative activity of emeriti, this round did not, and indeed the enhanced rate of pay for post-retirement teaching above the

CUPE Unit 2 rate has not been maintained. The CUPE rate had risen to the level of the previous enhanced rate and the YUFA rate did not rise accordingly.

My good friend and colleague (and current co-President of YURA), John Lennox, whom I have known since we were undergraduates at Glendon, reminds me from time to time that we are very fortunate and that our pensions and benefits are really quite good. I cannot disagree, but I recognize that not all have been employed full-time at York as long as John and me (and their pensions reflect that fact) and I also know that as good as our benefits are, we can always think of ways they could be better. Our grasp has fallen far short of our reach this year, but I hope others will have better success in future negotiations.

When we elect new officers in November, I will have been three years in this post. I believe it is time for new blood and I am in the process of arm-twisting some current Executive members to consider taking up the Presidency. I will cease that harassment if a volunteer emerges.



ARFL Treasurer's Report

Stanley Jeffers

A detailed balance sheet as of April 5 has been uploaded to ARFL's website: yuarfl.org

Briefly, as of April 5, we had a total of 237 members of whom 145 are up to date with their dues and 71 who have yet to renew for 2015/16. Those members are encouraged to renew preferably using PayPal or mailing in a cheque. 21 members are currently enjoying their first year's membership for free.

The current account stands at \$7188.53. The total invested in GIC's stands at \$18,081.71 Liabilities include pre-paid membership dues (\$1000),(29 members have pre-paid for 2016/17, 7 have pre-paid for 2017/18 and 4 have pre-paid for 2018/19), estimated expenses for the 2016 meeting of CURAC (\$1000), catering for the May General Meeting (estimated at \$750)-total liabilities amount to \$2,750. The accumulated surplus then is \$22,520.24.

As of April 5, 100 members have paid by cheque and 45 have availed themselves of the opportunity to pay using PayPal. A PayPal link has been set up on our website (yuarfl.org) which members are strongly encouraged to use. No PayPal account is required-you may pay at any time using your credit card. PayPal will issue a receipt. Some members may be in the habit of claiming their ARFL dues as a tax credit and may require a receipt issued by ARFL. If you require such a receipt, please e-mail the Treasurer (stanj@yorku.ca) who would be happy to provide you with an ARFL receipt. It is very convenient both for the membership and the Treasurer if more members would renew on line.

Please note that this is the third year of service by the current Treasurer who will be stepping down at the November AGM. The job of Treasurer has now been streamlined. All the relevant files are now in Excel or Word format which makes the keeping of the books quite straightforward. Please consider putting your name forward in the Fall to act as Treasurer.



In Memoriam

The ARFL Newsletter will, from time to time, carry an *In Memoriam* section. If you know of one of our colleagues who has passed away, please let us know with any details that you might have. Short pieces about the person are also welcome.



Editor's Note:

Readers may recall that last year we sent out a request to ARFL members to consider contributing personal stories about their research and times at York. The request still stands. So please do consider telling your own story in your own way and in your own words...

Your current Newsletter editor will be stepping down from this position after the Fall issue. Bob Drummond seeks a replacement as President, as does Stanley Jeffers for Treasurer. The ARFL Executive urges colleagues to come forward in November.



Travis Blanchard

(Travis Blanchard is this year's recipient of the Lee Lorch Memorial Award and has submitted the following in response to our request. We hope that he will be able to join us at our May 13 meeting.)

I was born no more than 20 minutes from where I currently live and have lived somewhere in the city of Toronto for all of my life. I moved quite a bit when I was

younger, finally settling in one spot for over a decade when I was approximately 8 years of age. Near where I grew up, an Archery club was offered and run by the local community centre. I joined and was fortunate enough to take to the sport naturally. I eventually went on to win national and international competitions along with many local tournaments. However, I eventually abandoned Archery, feeling that it simply didn't match who I was and am. My focus is on people, hence majoring in psychology, but on the Archery line and in training you are alone, which doesn't suit my personality well at all. I was in grade 7 when I left Archery and was lucky enough to be one of the few students in my grade to be chosen to be in a split grade 7/8 class. I would stay with that one teacher for the remainder of my elementary years and his mentorship would bring out my hitherto dormant academic spirit. I went from being a student who would have failed, had it been allowed when I was in grade 6, to a top-of-the-class type student in grade 8, graduating with an award in mathematics. Upon entering high school my trajectory changed and it would be a few years before I would take academia seriously again.

I abandoned academics in high school in pursuit of a more enriched social experience. Essentially, I spent too much time making friends and too little time making grades. This continued until I opted to work instead of learn and officially dropped out of high school in my late teens. I worked for a few years as a customer service representative taking telephone orders for charity lotteries such as the Heart and Stroke, Princess Margaret, and Sick Kids lotteries. I began working there when I was 19 years old in 2008 and stayed until 2012. In 2012 I decided I wanted to be an electrician,

ironically enough, and began earning my high school diploma and physics credit toward that end. I enrolled in adult learning to earn said diploma and credit, however, while attending adult school I rediscovered my love for learning and discovered an appreciation for being in school that I never had. It was then that I decided I would do what I had always really wanted to do and become a psychologist. I changed my classes to give me the necessary credits to apply to university. I focused, achieved an A average, and graduated as valedictorian from the adult school. I was then admitted to York university as a mature student and have continued to strive for excellence in my studies ever since, which is made all the easier by winning amazing awards such as this one.

The reduction in financial stress from winning awards such as the Lee Lorch Memorial Award should, theoretically, free up mental resources for studying, which is a fact of life for the aspiring academic. My focus, as an aspiring academic, is on the brains of individuals who commit acts of sexual violence. I adopt a bio-cognitive view of abnormal behaviour and believe that distorted thought processes arise from an abnormal brain and are responsible for much of the dysfunction seen in those experiencing various forms of psychopathology. I hope that as neuroimaging techniques improve over the next decade our ability to study the brain will improve and lead to exciting and significant discoveries in many areas, least of all the area of abnormal behaviour. It is my wish to be on the leading edge of that frontier, in my chosen field, making discoveries that will improve our knowledge and treatment of abnormal behaviour. Eventually, I would like to pass on my knowledge and experience through teaching.

I have a dream, and that is it. This award makes the realization of my dream all the more possible, and I am eternally grateful for that.



Full knee replacement surgery-the good, bad and the ugly.

Stanley Jeffers

I have experienced increased levels of pain and discomfort in my left knee for the last few years exacerbated, no doubt, by the martial arts training that I have done for many years but also by the onset of old age. A consultation at York's Sports Injury Clinic resulted in the following diagnosis "you have old man's knee!" aka osteoarthritis -namely the complete absence of the cartilage that should act as a shock absorber. Temporary relief was afforded by injections of Duralane (a lubricating gel) and cortisone. However, the pain persisted and I was advised that a knee replacement operation was indicated. I had some indication as to what was involved as my wife had the same operation 4 years ago. The recovery was long, slow and initially quite painful. Four years later, she now skis better than ever and is very pleased with the outcome. I had a consultation with her surgeon Dr Tim Deakon of the Oakville Trafalgar hospital who informed me that the earliest he could operate would be six months hence. Dr Deakon has a good reputation as a surgeon and is very much in demand. Three months later, he had a cancellation and I agreed to be operated on Feb 11.



The photo on the left shows the wound a few days post-operation and the one on the right was taken two weeks after the operation when the staples had been removed.

As part of the preparation for the operation, I had a session with the anesthetist who explained that I would be having a spinal injection to numb my lower extremities followed by more medication to knock me out. She then cheerfully announced "Don't worry if you wake up in the middle of the operation!" "How often does that happen?" I exclaimed. "Not often but don't worry as you will be numb from the waist down". I had an image of seeing my surgeon, skill saw in hand, about to slice through my bones. However, I did remain unconscious throughout the two hour operation. For the curious, but not the squeamish, you may view an actual operation [here](#).

The operation was conducted in the brand new Oakville Trafalgar Hospital recently completed at a cost of \$20 million. It is a very impressive facility and I had a private room fortunately covered at 100% by Sun Life. I was in hospital for four days. Despite pain medication, I did experience severe pain for some two weeks after the operation which meant an almost lack of sleep coupled with severe constipation. The staples were removed some 10 days after the operation. The site of the operation was and remains



John Saul Honoured

John S. Saul, FRSC, Professor Emeritus, Political Science, York University is to be awarded an honorary doctoral degree by the University of Johannesburg on April 13 2016.

The announcement reads in part “in recognition of the remarkable contribution he has made to social science in South Africa and the wider region and his commitment to academic excellence in pursuit of social justice.”

Since his formal retirement in 2004, John has continued his work as a scholar and activist, making important addresses and publishing many articles and eight books, most recently *A Flawed Freedom: Rethinking Southern African Liberation* (2014). He has also remained active in York’s Department of Political Science. Among his publications is a memoir, *Revolutionary Traveller: Freeze-Frames from a Life* (2009).

John’s work has focused on the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and included active involvement in Canadian movements devoted to that goal. As a scholar, he stresses the importance of deep involvement with the societies in which he works, with close attention to the concrete realities of the country and people.



very swollen. Physiotherapy starts soon after discharge and comprises many different types of stretches in order to regain lost muscle strength and flexibility in the knee joint. A side effect of the operation is significant weight loss-in my case around 14 lbs, mostly loss of thigh muscle and gluteus maximus. For a full recovery, it is very important to do these exercises properly and regularly. A Google survey of those who have had such an operation results in a wide variety of personal experiences ranging from “I am now fully recovered and completely pain free-the best thing I have ever done” to “I am now in more pain than before the operation, I wish I had never had it done.” I suspect those in the latter category may not have taken the physiotherapy seriously. OHIP covers seven sessions of physiotherapy. I am continuing with physiotherapy three times a week. This is covered after \$130 deductible at 80% with no cap by Sun Life. OTIP will cover the remaining 20%.

Full recovery takes several stages-the initial stages focussing on regaining full extension of the knee joint with the ability to walk short distances unaided, at 4-6 weeks one should be able to return to work and resume driving, at 7-12 weeks one may be able to return to low impact activities such as cycling, golf or swimming.

I am now at stage two but hope to be fully recovered by mid to late summer and resume most if not all of my regular activities. It remains to be seen if this includes training and teaching the martial arts as these activities can involve considerable stress on the joints. In the meantime, I am enjoying the convenience of having a handicapped parking permit albeit a temporary one.

SNOWBIRDING IN MEXICO

Paul Wilkinson

So, you are interested in becoming a Snowbird, spending your retirement winters in some warm, sunny place – but you rejected Mexico. You might have many reasons for this decision, but I bet some of your more common ones are:

- Banditos or guerillas will rob or kidnap you.
- The Cartel will kill you.
- Drinking the water will lead to fatal Montezuma’s revenge.
- Eating lettuce with your dinner in a restaurant will result in massive food poisoning.

I have been visiting Mexico since 1979 – and none of those things have happened to me. I do know someone who got their wallet picked recently in a crowd in Guadalajara – but then I had my wallet stolen in Amsterdam years ago. I have never seen a member of the Cartel – at least, as far as I know. I drink tap water when I know it is safe (which is most of the time) and I don’t worry about ice in my drink in restaurants. And I had lettuce on an enchilada the other day and my partner had a Caesar’s salad.

Unlike in other cities such as Mexico City, most resort towns don’t have significant local museums, theatre, and culture. If you want these amenities, try places such as Guadalajara, Cuernavaca, Patzcauro or San Miguel de Allende – all of which are major long-stay destinations for many Snowbirds. I am focusing here on coastal resort areas, on the assumption that most Snowbirds are looking for sun, sand, and sea destinations. I have really only resided long-term in one place, here in Nuevo Vallarta just north of

Puerto Vallarta, this year for the first time. But NV has many of the same characteristics as other coastal resorts and I have been to nearly all of them.

I am assuming you want to rent, not buy – at least at first. Rule Number 1: don’t buy until you have rented in the area and know the area and the building well. Rule Number 2: don’t buy in the current market with the current value of the Canadian dollar. (I just made up these rules, but....) All tourist real estate is valued in US dollars. The real estate market in Mexico is ... well, “flat” is too simple a word to describe it. For example, there are literally thousands of condos for sale here (out of a condo stock of about 20,000 units in a 50 km stretch of coast centred on PV), ranging from US\$100,000 to US\$5Million. The average time from putting a unit up for sale until it is sold appears to be about 3-4 years. (No, that is not a typo. Mexico is not a speculator’s nirvana.) There are numerous condo buildings, mostly high-rise (i.e., 8-15 stories), that have sat partially empty for a long time here and there are some that have been abandoned in mid-construction.

There are many rental condos and apartments here at reasonable prices, e.g., US\$700/week for a 1-bedroom, furnished unit. Some are in the middle of the city and others are more remote and isolated. Many are beautiful, with magnificent views of Pacific sunsets, lovely pools, long beaches, and high-end furnishings. Others look attractive from a distance, but have serious problems when you get a closer look or, unfortunately, have rented one: tacky furniture, leaky plumbing, poor maintenance, low quality facilities, isolated from shopping and restaurants. Many renters return year after year to units that they enjoy, but don’t want to buy.

Living costs for many things are lower than in Canada, but higher for others. On the whole, you aren't going to have a cheap time here, but you will live very well by Canadian standards.

Size matters – to some people, at least. Large complexes, such as the one next to my partner's condo complex, have major first-class facilities (e.g., spa, fitness centre, several pools, many restaurants, country club, golf course, etc.). But we have access to all those facilities because both complexes were built by the same (Canadian) developer.

If I were to buy a condo in this area, I would choose my partner's complex. Its location, size, design, and layout are ideal: low-rise, relatively small (105 units), 2 pools with large, beautiful gardens, and a view to a marina on a river and to the sunrise over the Sierra Madre Mountains. All of the units in this well-constructed complex are large, ranging from 1-3 bedroom apartments to 5-bedroom attached villas. Maintenance and up-keep are immaculate and the staff is friendly, professional, and hard-working. This 12-year-old complex is at the point where major upgrades are needed, e.g., AC chilling units last year and boilers this year. The complex is about 90% (American, Canadian, and, to a lesser extent, Mexican) owner-occupied (of whom a small proportion rent out their unit for limited time periods) and 10% developer-owned (rented out regularly). The owners' group is active and the reserve fund adequate, with reasonable annual fees, so the needed upgrading is taking place. That is not the case in all condo complexes, however. And don't expect Canadian warranty systems, such as Ontario's Tarion. Beware: the Mexican legal

system is ... well ... interesting, inscrutable, and frequently changing.

There are other factors to take into account about a desirable location. We are, for example, a US\$12-15 taxi ride into the centre of PV and about US\$8-10 to nearby shopping malls, each with a large supermarket (including Mexican chains or US chains such as Walmart and Costco). Public buses are frequent and cheap (US\$1.50 for an interesting 1-hour 2-bus ride into the centre of PV – but don't try it with shopping bags). The small supermarket near this condo would meet food/refreshment needs for a week-long stay, but not for longer-stay fruit, vegetables, meat, etc. The days of shopping in colourful local outdoor markets for basic foods is gone in most places (largely thanks to shopping malls).

Is a beach access or view important to you? Watch out for "5-minute access" or "across the street" claims. Sometimes, that means a 5-minute walk – or more – via very busy streets and a public access path between private properties. Beaches are public property in Mexico, but physical access is not universal except at rights-of-way or public open spaces. And don't expect small tropical beaches à la Caribbean. The beach here is big and beautiful, but it is the Pacific Ocean and surf's up – frequently!

Restaurants abound, ranging from beach shacks to fast-food joints (McDonald's, Domino Pizza, Subway, etc.) to high-end dining. There are, reportedly, 108 restaurants in NV alone and many more in PV.

Is the life of a Snowbird in Mexico for you? Only you will be able to tell, but you won't know unless you try it. And I suggest that you do try it – having listened to all the

stories both negative and positive from others and taken them with a grain of salt – and make up your own mind.



ARFL Membership Renewal

Members are reminded that our membership year is from July 1 to June 30. Dues of \$25 for 2016-17 will therefore be due July 1, 2016. We encourage you to pay on line if that is convenient. You may do so by credit card or Pay Pal account using the Pay Pal link on our website; please go to the Dues tab at the top of the Home screen and click on the Pay Dues On Line tab. You will be taken to a Pay Pal site at which you can pay. If you prefer, you may instead send a cheque payable to Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians, c/o YUFA, 240 York Lanes, York University, 4700 Keele St., Toronto M3J 1P3. If you don't trust your memory as far as July, please feel free to pay early. Or you can bring a cheque to the General Membership Meeting in May or the Annual General Meeting in November.



<p>Email contacts for current ARFL Executive Board members may be found on our website at yuarfl.org</p>
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New ARFL Website

ARFL's website (yuarfl.org) has a new look and lots of useful information. We hope you will visit this site regularly for updates about our activities as well as those of CURAC and YURA.

We would also like to share information you may have on health matters, finances, university and community events, book launches and the like of interest to our larger membership.

You can simply send us such information via the [contact](#) tab on our website. Do you have comments on our new website? Are there aspects that you like? What other information would you like to see there? We welcome such feedback. Just click the [contact](#) tab to let us have your opinions.

Visit us regularly to keep in touch with the activities of your former colleagues and find out what is happening at the university and beyond.

